

ARTICLE 74

Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

Marriage a gift from God

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Marriage! Family Matters

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God is Order

God is a God of order. Simply put, this tells us that God does everything for a particular purpose. He creates things for a purpose and we have 'right order' when that purpose is being followed. The maxim '*a place for everything and everything in its place*' captures the essential essence of right order. Conversely, disorder, is when persons or things are used contrary to the purpose for which God created them.

The Importance of Precision in the Use of Language

Language is very important, as it is a tool for expressing meaning. Precision in the use of language is also important in order to avoid confusion. Today we hear many calls from within the Catholic Church to abandon the old Catholic terminology because it may cause offence to certain people. For example, there are those who no longer want Catholics to describe same-sex relationships as 'disordered'.

The Meaning of Dis-Ordered

The problem with this is, that the term 'disordered' precisely describes the nature of same-sex relationships. They go against right order. In other words, they contradict the purpose for which God created human sexuality. If we stop using this term, which has God as its focus, then we will probably add confusion to the debate. Same-sex relationships are either in accord with God's plan or they are not. They are either ordered or they are disordered. Men may be confused about the nature of what is ordered but God is certainly not confused. Those who wish to discard Catholic terminology are usually trying to justify same-sex relationships in certain circumstances or to make allowances and accommodations where none should be made.

Concern for those with Same-Sex Attraction

This of course is not to say that we should not be concerned about those who are affected by same-sex attraction. These people are not responsible for their condition but we do not help them by denying that their condition is a disorder or by failing to call them to live chastely as all men are called to live.

The Clarity of Pope Pius XII

I have found, in reading the writings of Pope Pius XII, that there is a refreshing clarity in how he expresses himself. He seeks to speak the truth and, whilst he is not out to offend anyone, this is not a consideration for him when it comes to speaking the truth. Sometimes, the only way not to cause apparent offence is to suppress the truth or not to speak the truth at all. Ultimately, a greater offence is caused by withholding the truth from those who most need to hear it, that is from those who are far from God on account of their sinful way of life.

In his allocution to midwives of October 1951, Pope Pius XII looks at the factors to be considered in the use of Natural Family Planning and his teaching on these matters is pertinent in other areas of life as well. He states.

Serious Motives must exist in order to use Natural Family Planning

“Serious motives, such as those which not rarely arise from medical, eugenic, economic and social so-called "indications," may exempt husband and wife from the obligatory, positive debt for a long period or even for the entire period of matrimonial life. From this it follows that the observance of the natural sterile periods may be lawful, from the moral viewpoint: and it is lawful in the conditions mentioned. If, however, according to a reasonable and equitable judgement, there are no such grave reasons either personal or deriving from exterior circumstances, the will to avoid the fecundity of their union, while continuing to satisfy to the full their sensuality, can only be the result of a false appreciation of life and of motives foreign to sound ethical principles.” (Allocution to midwives Oct 29th 1951)

The last sentence has particular relevance to our culture which has become so blatantly sexual and pornographic and which promotes the sensual aspect of our sexuality whilst all but ignoring the life giving, baby aspect. This life giving, begetting of children is the primary purpose of our human sexuality and it is the end to which our human sexuality is ordered. There's that word 'order' again. Pope Pius XII then goes on to talk about continence.

Where Maternity must be Avoided!

“Perhaps you will now press the point, however, observing that in the exercise of your profession you find yourselves sometimes faced with delicate cases, in which, that is, there cannot be a demand that the risk of maternity be run, a risk which in certain cases must be absolutely avoided, and in which as well the observance of the agenesic periods either does not give sufficient security, or must be rejected for other reasons. Now, you ask, how can one still speak of an apostolate in the service of maternity?”

Do Not say 'YES' where the moral answer is 'NO'

“If, in your sure and experienced judgement, the circumstances require an absolute "no," that is to say, the exclusion of motherhood, it would be a mistake and a wrong to impose or advise a "yes." Here it is a question of basic facts and therefore not a theological but a medical question; and thus it is in your competence. However, in such cases, the married couple does not desire a medical answer, of necessity a negative one, but seeks an approval of a "technique" of conjugal activity which will not give rise to maternity. And so you are again called to exercise your apostolate inasmuch as you leave no doubt whatsoever that even in these extreme cases every preventive practice and every direct attack upon the life and the development of the seed is, in conscience, forbidden and excluded, and that there is only one way open, namely, to abstain from every complete performance of the natural faculty. Your apostolate in this matter requires that you have a clear and certain judgement and a calm firmness.”

Note the clarity with which Pope Pius XII speaks. The couple for whom pregnancy must be absolutely avoided on account of the woman's health are called to complete continence in their marriage. They must forgo the marital act.

In Accord with Right Order

The importance of this position stems, once again, from right order, and we need to be clear on this point. When human sexuality is detached from its inherent fecundity, and when the secondary ends of human sexuality are exalted above the primary end, we end up with disorder. This disorder not only attacks the value and the dignity of woman, turning her into a object for the satisfaction of men, it also attacks marriage and it attacks the virtue of religious continence and celibacy. Disordered sexuality is not confined to those who suffer from same-sex attraction.

It is not surprising when we hear those who fail to uphold Church teaching with regard to contraception also arguing for an end to the Church's teaching and practice on clerical celibacy. There is a connection between the two and the connection has to do with right order. As ohn Chrysostom says

Marriage and Virginitv are both Reflections of God's Glory

“Whoever denigrates marriage also diminishes the glory of virginity. Whoever praises it makes virginity more admirable and resplendent. What appears good only in comparison with evil would not be truly good. The most excellent good is something even better than what is admitted to be good.” (St John Chrysostom, De virg)

As we have seen from Pope Pius XII, there are times, when even a married couple may be called to complete continence. This so completely contradicts today's culture that there are many within the Catholic Church who today deny this important teaching and who argue in favour of contraception or sterilisation in these cases. More on this later.

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